

Common Core State Standards Initiative

Frequently Asked Questions

September 21, 2010

1. What are Educational Standards?

Educational standards define what a student should know, understand and be able to do. They are academic in focus, rigorous but attainable, readily understood and designed to measure the progress of students toward meeting them.

2. Why do we need common educational standards?

Standards ensure that all students, from school to school and state to state, are prepared for success in college and are career ready. Standards do not tell teachers how to teach, but they do help teachers address the knowledge and skills their students need. Standards also help students and parents by setting clear and realistic goals for success. Standards are key building blocks in providing our young people with a high-quality education.

3. What is the Common Core State Standards development initiative? Who developed the standards?

The Common Core State Standards Initiative (<http://www.corestandards.org>) was led by the [National Governor's Association \(NGA\)](#) and the [Council of Chief State School Officers \(CCSSO\)](#), working with [Achieve](#), [ACT](#) and the [College Board](#), among other education groups. In September 2009, CCSSO and NGA distributed for review the College and Career-readiness Standards intended to define the knowledge and skills students need to succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses and work training programs. These standards provided the foundation for the K-12 Common Core State Standards.

Since December 2009, the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) reviewed several drafts of mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) standards and provided critical comments to the CCSSO and the NGA. The K-12 Common Core State Standards for Mathematics and the K-12 Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies and Science were released June 2, 2010.

4. Are the Common Core State Standards curriculum?

No. It is the responsibility of the local school districts to develop curriculum aligned to the Montana Content Standards. If the Common Core State Standards were adopted by the Montana Board of Public Education, these would become the Montana Content Standards for Mathematics and Communication

Arts. Districts would align the local curriculum to the standards as required under Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) 10.55.603.

5. Are states required to adopt the Common Core State Standards?

No. Adoption of the Common Core State Standards is a voluntary action by each state.

6. Is there a timeline for the potential adoption of the Common Core State Standards?

The state superintendent will make a recommendation concerning the potential adoption of the Common Core State Standards to the Montana Board of Public Education (BPE) in May 2011. The BPE is authorized by the Montana Constitution to adopt Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) for the accreditation of public schools in our state. These accreditation standards include the content standards and performance descriptors in all academic areas. The Office of Public Instruction is working with Montana K-12 and post-secondary educators to compare the current BPE content standards and performance descriptors in Communication Arts and Mathematics to the Common Core State Standards. These comparisons will become the basis of the recommendation from the state superintendent. If the state superintendent recommends adoption and the BPE accepts that recommendation, the BPE would follow the Montana Administrative Procedures Act (MAPA) to adopt the new standards. The MAPA requires public hearings on a specified timeline which, in this case, would allow adoption in December 2011.

7. What happens to the considerable efforts of Montana educators to develop the current standards if the Common Core State Standards are adopted?

If adopted, it is important to recognize that the previous work done on the development and implementation of Montana's content standards has been a valuable part of the learning process of developing an effective system of standards-based education. The Montana content standards provide the necessary basis to compare and determine gaps and overlapping content in the Common Core State Standards. The thoughtful and difficult work that Montana educators have contributed to the process of the development of Montana Content Standards will continue to inform the decision making process as the Common Core State Standards initiative unfolds.

8. Were Montana educators involved in the development of the Common Core State Standards?

No

9. Were Montana educators involved in the review of the Common Core State Standards?

Yes, Montana educators have participated in the review. Teams of educators reviewed the proposed standards to determine the alignment of the Common Core State Standards with the Montana Content and Performance Standards. This information is available on the OPI Web page:

http://www.opi.mt.gov/Curriculum/Index.html?qpm=1_7

10. Are there future plans for developing Common Core State Standards in other content areas?

The development of Common Core State Standards in Social Studies is being facilitated by the CCSSO. In addition, conceptual frameworks for Science are being developed by the National Research Council and ACHIEVE.

11. Will the Montana Board of Public Education adopt the Common Core State Standards in ELA and Mathematics?

Adoption of the Common Core State Standards is voluntary for states. However, if adopted, the standards must be adopted as written and the state will have the opportunity to include additional state standards (15% more content maximum) which go beyond the Common Core State Standards. The Montana State Superintendent will make a recommendation in May 2011 to the Board of Public Education concerning the potential adoption of the Common Core State Standards. The BPE will make a decision about adoption following the superintendent's recommendation.

12. If the Montana Board of Public Education were to adopt the Common Core State Standards, would it be necessary for Montana to develop additional standards?

As stated in Question 11, states that adopt the Common Core State Standards have the opportunity to include additional state standards which go beyond the Common Core State Standards. Alignment studies are currently being conducted to compare the current Montana content standards to the Common Core State Standards. The results of the comparison studies will determine if Montana would need to adopt additional standards if the Common Core State Standards were adopted by the BPE. However, it is already apparent that Indian Education for All (IEFA), a constitutional requirement for Montana schools, is not included in the Common Core State Standards, and Montana would need to develop additional standards concerning IEFA.

13. Is the federal funding that Montana school districts will receive different if the state does or does not adopt the Common Core State Standards?

At this time, federal funding levels and the impact of adoption or non-adoption has not been specified by the U.S. Department of Education.

14. Will a national assessment be developed to measure the Common Core State Standards?

According to the NGA/CCSSO, the Common Core State Standards will ultimately be the basis for a system of high-quality assessments. States have the opportunity to come together to develop new innovative, common assessments. Montana has joined in the "SMARTER Balanced" consortium of states for this purpose. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has awarded \$350 million from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 for the development of new assessments to measure the Common Core State Standards.

15. What will these Common Core State Standards mean for students?

The standards will provide more clarity about, and consistency in, what is expected of student learning across the country. Currently, every state has its own set of academic standards, meaning public education students at the same grade level in each state may be expected to achieve to different levels. This initiative will allow states to share information effectively and help provide all students with an equal opportunity for an education that will prepare them to go to college or enter the workforce, regardless of where they live. Common standards will not prevent different levels of achievement among students, but they will ensure more consistent exposure to materials and learning experiences through curriculum, instruction, and teacher preparation among other supports for student learning. In a global economy, students must be prepared to compete with not only their American peers in the next state, but with students from around the world. These standards will help prepare students with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in college and careers.

16. What is the role of the federal government in the implementation of the Common Core State Standards?

The federal government has had no role in the development of the Common Core State Standards.

However, the federal government will have the opportunity to support states as they begin adopting the standards. For example, the federal government can:

- Support this effort through a range of tiered incentives, such as providing states with greater flexibility in the use of existing federal funds, supporting a revised state accountability structure, and offering financial support for states to implement the standards.
- Provide long-term financial support for the development and implementation of common assessments, teacher and principal professional development, and research to help continually improve the Common Core State Standards over time.
- Revise and align existing federal education laws with the lessons learned from the best of what works in other nations and from research.

If adopted by the Montana Board of Public Education, the OPI will provide a variety of professional development opportunities as well as support resources to assist districts to realign local curriculum to the Common Core State Standards.

17. What does this work mean for students with disabilities and English language learners?

Common standards will provide a greater opportunity for states to share experiences and best practices within and across states that can lead to an improved ability to best serve young people with disabilities and English language learners. Additionally, the K-12 English Language Arts and Mathematics Standards include information on application of the standards for English language learners and students with disabilities.